1. A method of tracking electronic content, the method comprising:

    producing a file that includes

        electronic content, and

        executable instructions that collect notification information and attempt to transmit the notification information to an address when triggered by an event, the executable instructions denying access to the electronic content until the notification information is transmitted successfully.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the executable instructions further deny access until an access granting message is received in response to the successful transmission of notification information.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the trigger event comprises an attempt to access the electronic content.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein an attempt to access the electronic content comprises an attempt to view, use, or list the electronic content.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein the trigger event comprises an attempt to access the electronic content on a computer that has not previously been used to access the electronic content.

6. The method of claim 3, wherein the trigger event comprises an attempt to access the electronic content by a user who has not previously accessed the electronic content.

1   7. The method of claim 1, wherein the executable
2 instructions that collect notification information comprise
3 instructions for querying a computer for notification
4 information.

1   8. The method of claim 1, wherein the executable
2 instructions that collect notification information comprise
3 instructions for interactively collecting information from a
4 user.

1   9. The method of claim 1, wherein the notification
2 information comprises demographic information.

1   10. The method of claim 9, wherein demographic
2 information comprises at least one of the following: a name,
3 an e-mail address, and an organization identifier.

1   11. The method of claim 1, wherein the notification
2 information comprises system information.

1   12. The method of claim 11, wherein system
2 information comprises a network address.

1   13. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic
2 content comprises compressed electronic content.

1   14. The method of claim 13, wherein the executable
2 instructions comprise instructions that cause the electronic
3 content to be decompressed after successfully transmitting
4 the notification information.

1   15. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic
2 content comprises encrypted electronic content.

1   16.   The method of claim 15, wherein the executable
2 instructions comprise instructions that cause the received
3 electronic content to be decrypted after successfully
4 transmitting the notification information.

1   17.   The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic
2 content comprises information included in at least one file
3 of data, text, graphics, audio, video, or an executable
4 program.

1   18.   The method of claim 1, further comprising,
2 transmitting the file via e-mail.

1   19.   The method of claim 18, wherein transmitting
2 the file via e-mail comprises transmitting the file as an e-
3 mail attachment.

1   20.   The method of claim 1, further comprising,
2 determining the address.

1   21.   The method of claim 20, wherein determining the
2 address comprises interactively receiving an address from a
3 user.

1   22.   The method of claim 20, wherein determining the
2 address comprises automatically identifying the address as
3 the address of the user creating the file.

1   23.   The method of claim 1, wherein the instructions
2 that transmit notification information comprise instructions
3 that dynamically determine how to transmit the notification
4 information via an intermediate device.

1   24.   The method of claim 23, wherein an intermediate
2 device comprises at least one of the following: a proxy
3 server and a firewall.

1   25.   A method of tracking access to electronic
2 content, the method comprising:
3   encrypting electronic content;
4   determining an address for receipt of notification
5 information; and
6   producing a file that includes
7   the encrypted electronic content, and
8   executable instructions that collect
9 notification information and attempt to transmit the
10 notification information to the determined address in
11 response to an attempt to access the electronic content on a
12 computer that has not previously accessed the electronic
13 content, the notification instructions decrypting the
14 encrypted electronic content after transmitting notification
15 information successfully.

1   26.   The method of claim 25, wherein decrypting the
2 encrypted electronic content after transmitting notification
3 information successfully comprises decrypting the electronic
4 content after receiving an access granting message.

1   27.   A method for tracking access to electronic
2 content, the method comprising:
3   receiving notification information from a recipient
4 of a file including electronic content, the notification
5 information being transmitted in response to an attempt to
6 access the electronic content, the notification information
7 including an identifier that identifies a user or computer
8 system;

9   determining an address for receipt of the
10 notification information; and
11   transmitting the notification information to the
12 determined address.

1   28. The method of claim 27, further comprising
2 transmitting access granting messages.

1   29. The method of claim 27, further comprising
2   verifying that the identifier that identifies a user
3 or computer system included in the notification information
4 corresponds to an authorized user of the software for
5 producing the file.

1   30. The method of claim 27, further comprising
2   updating information corresponding to the identifier
3 that identifies a user or computer system included in the
4 notification information.

1   31. The method of claim 30, wherein updating
2 comprises computing a usage charge.

1   32. A computer-implemented method of regulating
2 access to electronic content, the method comprising:
3   collecting notification information in response to
4 an attempt to access the electronic content;
5   attempting to transmit the collected notification
6 information to an address; and
7   selectively granting access to the electronic
8 content based on a result of the attempted transmission of
9 the notification information.

1   33. The method of claim 32 in which access to the
2 electronic content is granted if the attempted transmission
3 is successful and access to the electronic content is denied
4 if the attempted transmission is unsuccessful.

1   34. The method of claim 32 in which access to the
2 electronic is granted if the attempted transmission results
3 in receipt of an access granting message and access to the
4 electronic content is denied if the attempted transmission
5 does not result in receipt of an access granting message.

1   35. The method of claim 32 in which access to the
2 electronic content is denied if no notification information
3 is collected.

1   36. The method of claim 32 in which the electronic
2 content is included in an attachment to an e-mail message.

1   37. The method of claim 36, in which the attempt to
2 transmit the collected notification information comprises
3 sending the notification information to an address
4 associated with an originator of the e-mail message.

1   38. The method of claim 36 in which the attempt to
2 transmit the collected notification information comprises
3 sending the notification information to an address other
4 than an address associated with an originator of the e-mail
5 message.

1   39. The method of claim 38 in which the other
2 address is designated by the originator of the e-mail
3 message.

1   40. The method of claim 32 further comprising,
2 prior to the collection of notification information,
3 detecting that a user of a computer system is attempting to
4 access electronic content embedded in an e-mail attachment.

1   41. The method of claim 32 further comprising
2 providing subsequent access to the electronic content,
3 without re-collecting or re-transmitting notification
4 information, if the notification information already has
5 been collected and transmitted successfully.

1   42. The method of claim 32 further comprising
2 deactivating the collection and transmission of notification
3 information after the notification information has been
4 collected and transmitted successfully.

1   43. The method of claim 42 further comprising
2 re-activating the collection and transmission of
3 notification information if the electronic content is
4 forwarded to another computer or another user.

1   44. The method of claim 32 in which the attempt to
2 transmit the collected notification information comprises
3 sending the notification information to an intermediate
4 server that routes the notification information to the
5 address.

1   45. A method of tracking access to electronic
2 content, the method comprising:
3   creating a file that includes electronic content and
4 causes access to the electronic content to be denied until
5 notification information has been successfully transmitted;

6   transmitting the file to a set of addresses that
7 includes at least one address; and
8   receiving notification information.

1   46. The method of claim 45, wherein transmitting
2 the file comprises transmitting the file by e-mail.

1   47. The method of claim 45, wherein receiving
2 notification information comprises receiving notification
3 information collected from an address other than an address
4 in the set of addresses.

1   48. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the
2 file comprises receiving a password that protects the
3 electronic contents.

1   49. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the
2 file comprises receiving identification of the electronic
3 content for inclusion in the file.

1   50. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the
2 file comprises compressing the electronic content.

1   51. The method of claim 50, wherein creating the
2 file comprises including information in the file needed to
3 decompress of the compressed electronic content.

1   52. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the
2 file comprises encrypting the electronic content.

1   53. The method of claim 52, wherein creating the
2 file comprises including information in the file needed to
3 decrypt the encrypted electronic content.

1   54.   The method of claim 52, wherein encrypting the
2   electronic content comprises encrypting the electronic
3   content using a password as encryption key.

1   55.   The method of claim 45, wherein creating the
2   file comprises determining an address that receives the
3   notification information.

1   56. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the
2   file comprises
3   receiving a password that protects the electronic
4   contents;
5   receiving identification of the electronic contents
6   for inclusion in the file;
7   compressing the electronic contents;
8   encrypting the electronic contents according to the
9   received password; and
10   determining an address that receives the
11   notification information.

1   57.   A computer-implemented method of regulating
2   access to e-mail, the method comprising:
3   detecting an attempt by a message recipient to
4   access received e-mail;
5   attempting to collect notification information from
6   the recipient;
7   selectively granting access to the e-mail based on a
8   result of the attempt to collect notification information.

1   58.   The method of claim 57 in which access to the
2   e-mail is granted if the attempted collection is successful
3   and access to the e-mail is denied if the attempted
4   collection is unsuccessful.

1   59.   The method of claim 57 further comprising, if
2   the attempt to collect notification information is
3   successful, selectively granting access to the e-mail based
4   on the content of the collected notification information.

1   60.   The method of claim 57 further comprising, if
2   the attempt to collect notification information is
3   successful:
4   attempting to transmit the collected notification
5   information; and
6   selectively granting access to the e-mail based on a
7   result of the transmission attempt.

1   61.   The method of claim 57 further comprising
2   notifying an originator of the e-mail that access to the
3   e-mail has been granted to the message recipient.

1   62.   A computer program, disposed on a computer
2   readable medium, for tracking electronic content, the
3   computer program including computer program instructions for
4   causing a computer to:
5   produce a file that includes
6   electronic content, and
7   executable instructions that collect
8   notification information and attempt to transmit the
9   notification information to an address when triggered by an
10 event, the executable instructions denying access to the
11 electronic content until the notification information is
12 transmitted successfully.

1   63.   The computer program of claim 62, wherein the
2   executable instructions further deny access until an access

3   granting message is received in response to the successful
4   transmission of notification information.

1   64.   The computer program of claim 62, wherein the
2   trigger event comprises an attempt to access the electronic
3   content.

1   65.   The computer program of claim 62, wherein the
2   executable instructions that transmit notification
3   information comprise instructions that dynamically determine
4   how to transmit the notification information via an
5   intermediate device.

1   66.   A computer program, disposed on a computer
2   readable medium, for regulating access to electronic
3   content, the computer program including instructions for
4   causing a processor to:
5   collect notification information in response to an
6   attempt to access the electronic content;
7   attempt to transmit the collected notification
8   information to an address; and
9   selectively grant access to the electronic content
10 based on a result of the attempted transmission of the
11 notification information.

1   67.   The computer program of claim 66 in which
2   access to the electronic content is granted if the attempted
3   transmission is successful and access to the electronic
4   content is denied if the attempted transmission is
5   unsuccessful.

1   68.   The computer program of claim 66 in which
2   access to the electronic content is granted if the attempted

3   transmission results in receipt of an access granting

4   message and access to the electronic content is denied if

5   the attempted transmission does not result in receipt of an

6   access granting message.

1   69.   The computer program of claim 66 in which

2   access to the electronic content is denied if no

3   notification information is collected.

1   70.   The computer program of claim 66 in which the

2   electronic content is included in an attachment to an e-mail

3   message.

1   71.   The computer program of claim 66, in which the

2   attempt to transmit the collected notification information

3   comprises sending the notification information to an address

4   associated with an originator of the e-mail message.

1   72.   The computer program of claim 66 in which the

2   attempt to transmit the collected notification information

3   comprises sending the notification information to an address

4   other than an address associated with an originator of the

5   e-mail message.

1   73.   The computer program of claim 66 in which the

2   attempt to transmit the collected notification information

3   comprises sending the notification information to an

4   intermediate server that routes the notification information

5   to the address.